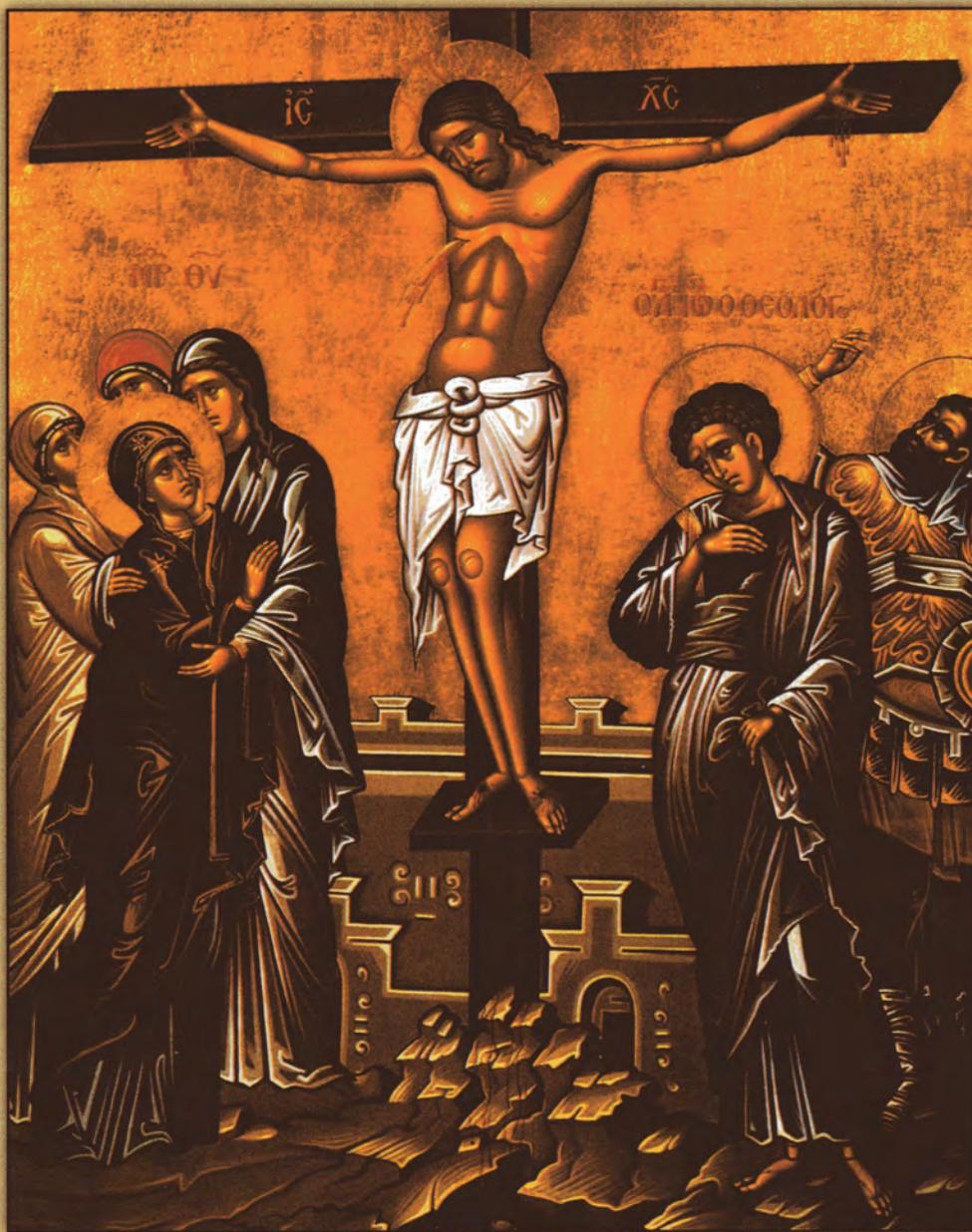


SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION
OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Crucifixion of Christ on the Cross

REFLECTIONS ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

On this 17th weekend after Pentecost when we also celebrate the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians and St. Mark's Gospel. These two readings are interesting since Paul summarizes his basic teaching about what the life of Jesus Christ means and Mark highlights the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross. In fact commentators on the New Testament mark this section in Mark's Gospel as the real Doctrine of the Cross. Mark writes: *if a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps.*

This statement recognizes that each human being has a certain "cross" to carry since it provides the opportunity for that person to spiritually grow. Spiritual growth only comes when we are challenged to actually believe what God has revealed to us through the life of Jesus Christ.

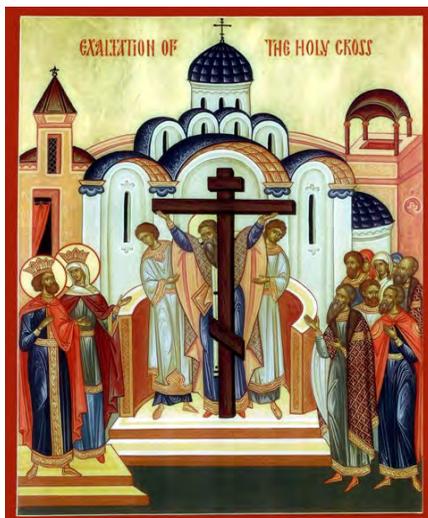
Can we love, forgive and trust in God when we are severely challenged? This is what we must learn. Life does not provide us with these challenges to punish us but to provide us with opportunities to truly grow. We are

called to not judge the challenges of life but, rather, to embrace them and to learn from them. Why? Because, as Paul tells us, *man is not justified by legal observances but by faith in Jesus Christ!* It is when we get to a point in our lives that we place our faith and trust in Christ, despite the bitter challenges that we might have to face, that we actually change – that we actually come to believe in God and, of course, in Jesus Christ Who is God's revelation about the meaning and purpose of life.

The meaning of life is that we are spiritual beings. The purpose of life is to advance in our understanding of this, learn the lessons that

life teaches and grow in our likeness of God as seen in the Person of Jesus.

Our Eastern Christianity, I believe, attempts to help us find life's meaning and purpose and not about following rules. Our faith is not fueled by fear of God's punishment for not keeping laws. Our Church focuses on making God's revelation about life real - about learning how to live so that we can spiritually grow and become all that God intended when He created us. Seek first the Kingdom of God and all else will follow!



THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is a very ancient feast. However, like the history of the finding of the holy Cross, the history of the institution of the feast has been obscured by various legends and it is not easy to separate historical fact from pious legend.

One must remember that in celebrating this feast, we are not concerned with the ordinary veneration of the holy Cross, which takes place on the third weekend of the Great Fast but with that aspect of the feast which is expressed in the name itself, that is EXALTATION.

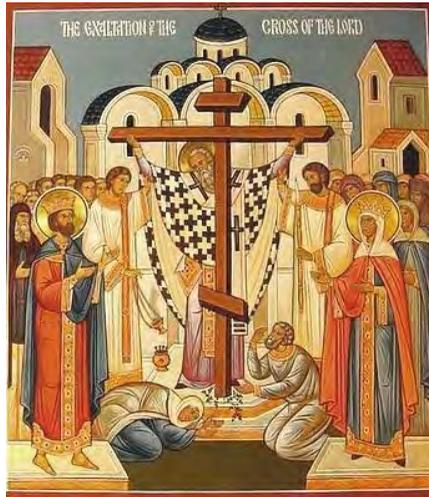
Historians of the Eastern Church generally agree that two particular events gave rise to the institution of this feast: the finding of the Holy Cross in the fourth century and its recovery or return from Persian captivity in the seventh century.

The institution of the feast was first preceded by the discovery of the Cross. Christian tradition has transmitted several different legends about its finding, three of which are attributed to St. Helena (330 CE), the mother of Emperor Constantine the Great. The finding is believed to have taken place in 326 CE.

Historians who mention the finding

of the Cross say nothing about its first exaltation nor does tradition give any account of it. The Greek Church celebrates the find on the 6th of March. The Latin Church celebrated this event on the 3rd of May, but after the reform of the feast days in 1960, this festival was excluded from the Roman Church Calendar.

The second important event, which rendered the feast universal in the East, was the recovery of the Cross from Persian captivity. The Persian King Chosroes in 614 CE captured Jerusalem and carried off the Cross to his capitol in Ctesiphon. Fourteen years later, Emperor Heraclius, after his victory over the Persian Empire, recovered the Cross and brought it back to Jerusalem. On the 14th of September

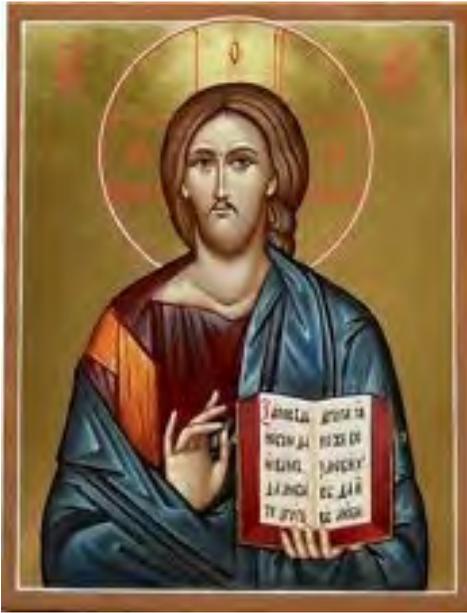


a second solemn EXALTATION of the Cross took place. Since the feast calls to mind the crucifixion and death of Christ, the Eastern Church gives it equal rank with Great and Good Friday. It has been a custom of our Church, therefore, to observe a strict fast on this day.

This feast is one of the twelve great feasts of our Church and has a one day pre-feast and a seven day post-feast.

We bow to Your Cross, O Master, and we praise your holy resurrection!

ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST



In this article, I have been presenting the Eastern Church's idea of the meaning of the Lord's death upon the Cross. I have been doing this by also presenting the ubiquitous idea within West Christianity that the Lord's death upon the Cross is to "satisfy" some dishonor that was given to the Father by mankind which necessitated the Son to "die for our sins". The Eastern Church flatly rejects this idea. The Father is not so dishonored by man's mistakes and failures that He required His Son to suffer and die on the Cross to make recompense for humankind's sins. What type of Father would ever do this?

Rather, we, in the Eastern Church, believe that Christ died on the Cross to essentially reveal to us how we must embrace the various challenges of life in order to spiritually grow. Life is designed to present to us the challenges to grow. This process of life is benevolent. God only desires us to grow. He wants us to become all that we can possibly be, namely His children. The only way that we will grow, however, is if we are challenged.

How do we learn to unconditionally love other? It is only if we face rejection, betrayal and hatred. Jesus faced this. He showed us that we can, when we face this in life, decide to love and forgive. We can become children of God, that is people who know how to unconditionally love despite how we are treated. Jesus did it! We can do it if we only place our hope and trust in God as Jesus did!

Of course this means that we have to conceive of life as a "learning" experience. Ask yourself this question. What am I suppose to learn during this earthly lifetime?

The problem I see is that most people don't see this earthly life as a time to "learn" how to be human. This just live! They just exist! They don't realize that there are here to learn something!

Further, many people don't learn that this earthly lifetime is given us to "grow" and to "change". Most people don't think about the necessity of personal change! They think everything is OK. We are here to change and grow. I wonder how many of my readers truly believe this?



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

PANCAKE BREAKFAST TODAY

Pancake
Breakfast



Please take the time to join us today for a special breakfast today. This is a community building activity. We thank John and Janet Dicky and our Parish

Council for sponsoring this event.

BULLETIN ARTICLES

Are there questions you would like me to address in my weekly Bulletin? Are there things you have wondered about with regard to our faith? If there are, why not drop me a note or email me at: WRuchgy@gmail.com. It is my desire to use this Bulletin as a learning tool so that all members will be as informed about their faith as possible. Also, if you read this Bulletin regularly, I'd like to know. Drop me a note or an email.



*Be happy for this moment.
This moment is your life*

CALLED TO HOLINESS

God calls us to holiness. He gives us His help, His grace, to help us create *Holy Moments* in life - that is moments during which we can truly connect to Him. With His *grace*, this can all come to pass.

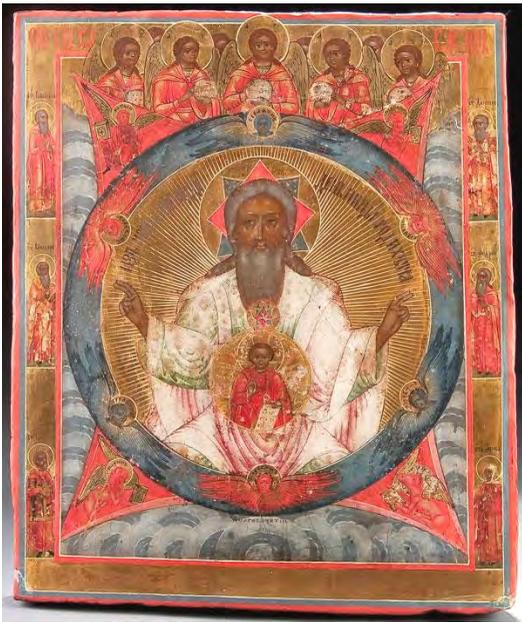


There is one word that very easily connects with the word *grace* and that is *Amazing*. Grace is amazing. We need it badly and we need it now. Time is short, but God knows that.

We have all been blind and stupid at times. We have been cowards and lovers of comfort. We have been blind and lost, but all that is about to change because amazing grace is going to open our eyes so that we can see what is really happening within us and around us.

It is time for us to remember the exhortation of John the Baptizer and Jesus: *Change your hearts and minds for the Kingdom of God is at hand*. Holiness becomes possible when we decide that we have been called by God to engage, with His help, ourselves in a program of *personal change*. Just as it is important for us to become engaged in (Continued on page 8)

MAN, THE TARGET OF GOD



I have been sharing ideas from an author who talks about man as the “Target of God.” In the last issue I presented the first characteristic of six characteristics of man.

The second characteristic of personhood is that man, after having gone through chastisement, and having borne the instruction of the Lord, acquires pure prayer. Pure prayer is a divine state in which the one who prays does not know whether he is in the body or outside the body. When man has endured patiently all the preliminary trials of the spiritual life, than sooner or later God will visit him. “It is only necessary to be caught up in the upper world once, to see all the mysteries revealed and every problem of this life of

the next one.

What the author is saying is that it is only when we begin to see that the challenges of this life as seen in the perspective of growing in to the next life that the experiences of life make sense. Again, we are here on this earth to learn how to become more “spiritual” - to become more like Jesus, more like the children that God intended when He created us.

I do know that most people, because of the press and stress of life, don’t have time to think about this reality - this major reason why we are alive. We are alive in order to grow as human beings - as children of God. Our society truly militates against this. We become so involved in just living that we don’t see the “bigger” picture. I see that people become so involved in living, with its natural overlay of politics, that they lose sight as to the real meaning and purpose of life. We become seduced by the events of our society that we cannot easily maintain our focus on the real meaning of life.

Ask yourself: *Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? What am I suppose to accomplish during this life?*

Of course this requires that we believe that there is something after this earthly life! If you think that there is only this earthly life than you will never ask yourself these questions. I believe that our religion calls us to believe that there is something more than this earthly existence. I believe that this earthly existence is only one part of an eternal plan of human and personal growth.

What do you believe?

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY - WHO IS GOD?

The Church wrestled for centuries to come up with the right words and phrase to express who we believe God to be. This entailed, as I shared in the last issue of this article, the assertion that there was only one divine substance or essence, or *ousia*, and that this expresses the unity of the Godhead.

But the divine *ousia* or essence was not to be understood - as with other generic terms - as what it is to be divine; that would not have safeguarded the unity of God, just as one human nature does not mean that there is only one man. Rather the divine *ousia* was understood to be the Father's being - the being of the one God we call Father - which has been extended in unbroken continuity to the Son, through begetting, and to the Holy Spirit, through procession. This was expressed in the amplified version of the Creed of Nicaea, issued in connection with the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381 CE), which defined the true religion of the Emperor Theodosios' Christian Roman Empire (this version of the creed is often referred to as the 'Nicene Creed', and is the form of the creed used by both the Eastern and Western Churches in worship, especially in the eucharistic liturgy - except by the Armenians, who use the actual creed of 325 CE).

By this time further terminology was developing (not stated explicitly in the Nicene Creed): God exists as three persons in one substance or essence. The preferred term for 'person' in Greek was not *prosopon*, though this word was used, but *hypostasis*, a word that could mean 'being', and is an exact equivalent of the Latin *substantia*, 'substance'; so that the Greeks spoke of one *ousia* and three *hypostases*. The Latins, on the other



hand used their traditional terminology that can be traced back to Tertullian in the early third century, of one *substantia* and three *personae* - one substance and three persons. It is easy to see that this terminology might lead to confusion as Latins and Greeks spoke to one another.

The affirmation of One God existing in three co-equal persons leads naturally to the notion of the Trinity and we begin to find the Christian God thought of simply as the Trinity. The Church had to change her understanding of One God when she decided, under the Spirit, that Jesus was and is also truly God as well as truly man.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

St. Michael the Archangel
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
6340 Chase Road
Dearborn, MI 48126

Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

Rectory: (313) 582-1424
Cell: (313) 580-4412
WRuchgy@gmail.com

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
In most instances membership
required for six months

Funerals
Membership of an immediate
family member required

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

Sunday, September 16 - 17th after the Exaltation - Tone 8

Parish Celebration of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross
10:00 AM + Health of Boris & Anna Bluj; Luba Bluj

18th WEEK AFTER PENTECOST - TONE 1

Monday, September 17 - Sophia & Others, Martyrs

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Tuesday, September 18 - Eumenius, Bishop

No service scheduled

Wednesday, September 19 - Trophimus & Others, Martyrs

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Thursday, September 20 - Eustace & Others, Martyrs

No service scheduled

Friday, September 21 - Condratus, Apostle

8:00 AM - Special Intention

Saturday, September 22 - Phocas, Bishop-Martyr

No service scheduled

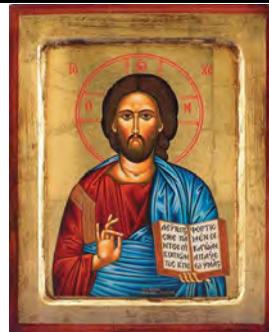
Sunday, September 23 - 18th after the Exaltation - Tone 1

10:00 AM + Special Intention

(Continued from page 5 - Called to Holiness)

a program of personal exercise for the sake of our health, so too it is important that we become engaged in a personal program of spiritual, psychological and emotional change. That's why we are here on earth! We are here to use the opportunities that life presents to bring about the personal change that makes us *spiritual/physical beings* who are growing in such a manner to truly become God's children - children who begin to think and live more like Jesus.

The call to holiness is a call to understand why we have been created, why we are living here on earth and why life is the way that it is!



<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org>
facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn

MORE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

In the last issue of the article, I quoted Leontius who wrote: *The Logos is said to have suffered according to the hypostasis, for within His hypostasis He assumed a passible [human] essence besides His own impassible essence, and what can be asserted of the [human] essence can be asserted of the hypostasis.* What this implies is that the characteristics of the divine essence - impassibility, immutability - are not absolutely binding upon the personal, or hypostatic, existence of God. This is an important point for the patristic and Byzantine understanding of God. On the level of soteriology, the affirmation that the Son of God indeed “died in the flesh” reflects, better than any other Christological formula, the boundlessness of God’s love for man, the reality of the appropriation by the Logos of mortal humanity - i.e., the very mystery of salvation.

An often-recurring criticism of Byzantine Christology, as it was defined by the Fifth Council, is that it, in fact, had betrayed Chalcedon by assuring the posthumous triumph of the one-sided views of Alexandrian Christology. Assumed by the divine hypostasis of the Logos, the humanity

of Christ, according to these critics, would have been deprived of an authentically human character. In Alexandrian Christology, one author writes, *there will never be any place for a true psychology of Christ, for a real cult of the Savior’s humanity, even if the assumption by the Word of a human soul is expressively recognized.* Another author maintains: *The tendency of the East to see Christ more and more as God (a tendency which is so marked in its liturgy) betrays a certain exclusivism which will increase after the schism.* This neo-Chalcedonism of the Byzantines is thus opposed to true Chalcedonian Christology and branded as a crypto-Monophysitism. It consists essentially in an understanding of the hypostatic union which would so modify the human properties of Jesus that He would no longer be fully man.

You can tell how very difficult it was for the Church to come to consensus about the truth of Christ. She finally asserted that Christ is fully and truly God and Man. I present all of this so that you, my readers, will know that the dogmas of our faith have been well thought out!



UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY GOSPELS

I ended the last issue of this article on Matthew's Gospel by sharing that Jesus did not come to destroy the Laws, but to fulfill it. To fulfill the law means to bring it to the fullness of which it is a developmental phase. The reign - and Jesus himself is identified with the reign - is this full reality. Jesus is Lord of the Law; he does not annul it any more than mature manhood annuls childhood, but the "yoke" of the reign removes the yoke of the Law. Jesus reduces all the 613 commandments of the Old Testament Law to the commandment of love; love is Christian freedom. Love communicates not a lesser righteousness, but a greater; and when the reign has arrived the Law is no longer righteousness.

In this context the controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees is not a controversy between Jesus and the Law. The Pharisees do not represent the true Law; they do not teach and observe the true Law, for they do not recognize that it demands its fulfillment in the Messiah. They have attributed to the Law a sufficiency it does not possess and have maintained its efficacy by adding to it the traditions of men. Jesus flatly rejects the Pharisaic thesis that the Law in its totality included "the traditions of the elders." These



traditions have made the Law an intolerable burden. The Pharisees have reduced the union of man with God to a carefully fixed set of routine external observances and have thus reduced righteousness to a man-made product. In effect, they deny man's sinfulness because they do not confess guilt for real sin; they polish the outside of the vessel, but their interpretation of the Law does not touch the heart.

In the development of these themes Matthew reflects the controversies of Christians and Jews in the apostolic Church; but very possible it also reflects discussions within the Jewish Christian community. It is clear from Acts and the Pauline epistles that the problem of the Gospel and the Law was the central theological problem of the first generation of the Church. Matthew has its place in this discussion. And in spite of the fact that it is called the Jewish Gospel, Matthew's thesis on the Law is the same as the thesis of Paul in substance, although it is couched in different terms.

We must always be wary to not make laws and traditions more important than our relationship with God which can only become real when we have genuine relationships with our fellow humans.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 36 16th Weekend After Pentecost September 8-9, 2018

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Eastern Spirituality is, as I conceive it, a call to truly embracing a life of personal change - a life that is dedicated to achieving the goals of learning how to unconditionally love others. Why do I say this? Because I believe that this is the true message that Jesus gave to us upon His Cross. He told us that life will present us with many challenges. This is not because life is some-kind-of real and true punishment from God for our mistakes, but, rather, because life is designed to help us change the way that we think and behave.

We as humans, are highly influenced by the society in which we live. We so easily embrace one or the other “political or social” philosophy that exists within our society and quickly forget what God has revealed to us through Jesus, His Son, the Christ. We human seem to embrace one political philosophy or

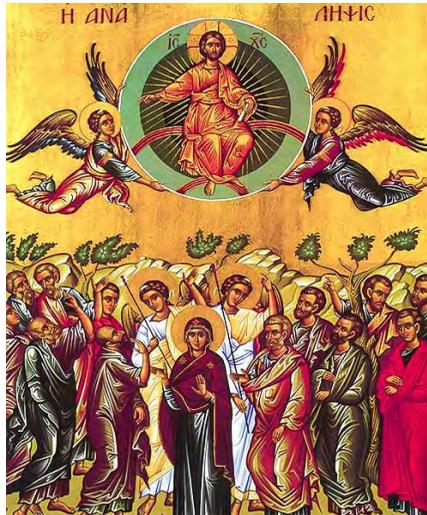
another. The problem is that “political” philosophies are not “Christian” philosophies” even though they may cloak themselves in Christian terms. They are political and only desirous to sway us to a particular political viewpoint.

Christian spirituality is all about changing us in such a way that we focus our lives on one thing: *Becoming true humans in the way that God intended when He created us and as He revealed to us through the person of Jesus.*

As I see it, all of the political philosophies current in our society are non-Jesus like. He had one message: *Love*

your neighbors as yourselves so that you can truly love God. Whenever we find ways to hate our neighbors - and this means all the other persons of this world - we damage our ability to love God.

Think about this! What are your attitudes about others people in this world?



Life's Journey Is an Ascension to

Whatever Their Size, Carry Them

“Whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel’s will save it.” One who knew the meaning of Jesus’ words so well was Flannery O’Connor, the distinguished Catholic novelist who died in 1964 at the age of 39. From the age of 25 she lived with the knowledge she had a terminal disease, Lupus, – not to mention her sufferings from bone disintegration, shingles, anemia, and a tumor. Yet it was during fourteen years of sickness and suffering that she produced her greatest works of literary art. Her strong faith enabled her to say: “I have never been anywhere but sick. In a sense sickness is a place, more instructive than a long trip to Europe. Sickness before death is a very appropriate thing and I think those who don’t have it miss one of God’s mercies ...”

Those are strong words! How could a young woman call sickness one of God’s mercies? Yet Jesus’

words in the Gospel are just as strong: “If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps.”

In some way Flannery O’Connor was able to accept the cross of her sickness and follow in the Lord’s footsteps. But she didn’t do it with a nice sweet smile on her face. She did it with strong courage and conviction. She realized that her own sickness was the very thing that helped her to look at life around her with the eyes of faith; and to translate that life into literary pages that would win her international fame as a writer. Each one of us is called upon to carry a cross in our life at some time. For some it may be the cross of emotional or spiritual suffering, rather than physical suffering. Sometimes there are big crosses, sometimes small. Whatever their size, Jesus calls upon us to carry them.